

ACHOO!!! Bye Paper!

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Summary: Rachel had a little cold... or so she thinks. But she struggles on working anyway. The only thing is she's sicker than she or the rest of the rats realise.

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*Disclaimer: Esme accused me of writing more in my disclaimer and author's notes in my last story, "Buttons And Roses", so I'll make this short and sweet. If there's anything untoward in here, I didn't do it. I refuse to be blamed for anything in here, so there. I take no responsibility for any thing you want to nit pick, so there.

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Author's Note: Thanks Esme! Your praise and support has been so valued! And thanks to Nat Williams for being my only mate into Water Rats (though not as addicted to it as me)! And thanks to all of my friends who I would be lost without. And of course I have to thank Funky and Spunky for their help and support, and replying to my little e-mails! PLEASE send me feedback, I'm begging you!
sydneygirl2b@hotmail.com as usual! And, thanks to everyone who reads my stories too, without you I wouldn't be writing stories... does that make sense?

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>"BRRRRRRRR!!!!" Rachel Goldstein's alarm clock went off, ignoring its master's peaceful, if somewhat noisy, slumber.
Rachel slowly began the trip into consciousness. The dreamy haze lifted, along with the numb feeling of sleep, and she could feel her control coming back to her strangely heavy limbs. Then the pain started. Oh the pain. Her head was hurting like hell. This was not good. She suddenly realised she had a sore throat, not helped by the fact that she was breathing through her mouth... bugger, her nose was blocked solid, the mucus like solid walls of concrete, impenetrable. "Ow, shit. Shut up you little shit." Rachel slammed her fist down on the alarm clock, ignoring the smashing sound that came from underneath her tight fist.

>She rubbed her eyes, cleared her throat, then forced her eyes open, wondering how she did it without a crowbar. Her throat was raw, her mouth numb. Her eyes felt like they were made of granite, and her head felt like a throbbing bowling ball. Her muscles hurt, her veins were sticking out of her hands, and she was going to sneeze. And cough. And probably hurl as well. Bugger. She yanked open a drawer and yanked out a hanky just in time. "ACHOO!!! Owah, shit." Rachel's voice now sounded like crap too, well, what was left of it...
She crawled out of bed and put on her watch, taking note of the time through her blurred vision. Six am. Good, she was on time so far... "ACHOO!!! Cough... Ew, gross." Rachel whispered to herself as her remaining voice decided to bugger off somewhere until its master was better.

>The flu, that's all she needed. Should she stay home? "No, I am not sick, I refuse to be sick." Rachel rasped, trying to force herself to be well.
She decided that since she "wasn't sick", she'd go to work, like any other day. She hobbled over to her full-length mirror and looked in it. "Holy... Nah, I'm imagining it." Rachel turned away from the pale-as-death creature in the mirror, her dark hair a stark contrast to her whiter-than-white skin.

>She summoned all of her strength and dragged her weary body to the closet, coughing all the way. She yanked open the doors, almost falling over when the doors sprung open suddenly. She sighed and looked in at all of her suits in her wardrobe. She tried to do a silent "eeny-meeny-miny-mo" thing, but she gave up and just yanked the first available suit, a black trouser suit, out of the row of clothes. She pulled it on, brushed out any small wrinkles that may have appeared, and grabbed her comb off her bedside table. She walked over to the mirror again and tidied her morning hair into a vaguely respectable mess, ignoring the ghost-like reflection standing before her. She thought about breakfast. Just the thought made her feel worse. So she decided on a liquid breakfast, coffee. Black, strong, sweet coffee. And lots of it. So she dragged her weary being down to the kitchen after pulling the curtains back which used up half of her strength. With every move her muscles hurt. She could have sworn that they were saying "Nooo, don't go! Please! We're in pain here!", but she just ignored it, thinking that *she* was the one putting up with the pain.

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>Rachel hugged herself as she waited for her car to warm up. She felt like shit. No, she didn't, she was fine. Who the hell are you kidding? She felt like total shit, in fact like shit that had been on the footpath at Darling Harbour for a month, getting trampled on by millions of people. She felt really bad, but she wouldn't admit it. She snapped out of her little trance to find the car ready and rearing to go. The drive there was pretty boring. Well, it would've been, but Rachel was seeing it in a new way today. There were identical twins in humans, dogs, cats, cars and bushes everywhere. Then the twin would be absorbed into the original object for a while, then slide out again. Well, that was weird, maybe she needed glasses. Rachel sighed as she pulled into the carpark of the ferry which had taken her from the jetty to Goat Harbour for work every day for five years. "Morning Detective! Gosh, you don't look so good! Maybe you shouldn't be going to work today?" Terry, the ferry captain, helped Rachel on board, concern clouding his usually sparkling eyes at the sight of the woman that could've easily been a ghost.
"I'm fine." Rachel's voice was making a comeback, now she could speak very quietly but she sounded like Fran Drescher.

>"Okay, you're the boss!" Terry headed back up to the wheelhouse and Rachel sat in her usual place, on a wooden bench at the back of the

boat.
The ferry bounced over the small waves as it made its way across the harbour from the city to Goat Island, Rachel's stop. "Have a nice day Detective! Hope you feel better soon, eh?" Terry called as Rachel jumped onto the jetty in front of the Sydney Water Police Headquarters.

>Rachel remembered she couldn't yell, so she threw a sick-looking grin at Terry as he sped off to his next destination. Rachel turned around to find Tommy and an identical twin standing before her.

"Rachel? Oh my god, you okay? You look terrible!" Tommy grabbed Rachel by the shoulder, fearing she would faint or something.
"Thanks mate. I'm fine. Remind me to repeat that last comment to you when you're sick." Rachel snapped croakily, snatching her arm away weakly and heading inside.

>She entered through the double doors as usual and went to see if Helen had any messages for her. "Helen? Anything for me?" She whispered, her voice failing again.
"What the...? Rachel! You look..." Helen began.

>"Terrible, yeah yeah. And before you ask I'm fine, and no I don't want to go home, I'm not sick." Rachel snapped impatiently.
"Nothing for you. You sure you don't want...?" Helen began again.

>"NO!" Rachel yelled in a loud whisper which was all she could manage.
With that Rachel turned on her heel and stomped up the stairs, ignoring Helen and Tayler's worried looks. She stormed down the corridor and battled with her and Frank's office's sticking door, her strength stores drastically depleted. She finally managed to get it open, then stormed in and sat down at her desk, ignoring Frank's concerned looks.

>"Ra..." Frank began.
"Shut up Holloway, if you say anything that doesn't relate to a case, I'm going to cough on you." Rachel had a new, real threat.

>Frank shut up and put his head back down staring at some case notes. "ACHOO!" Rachel sneezed, blowing some paper off the top of her neat stack in the centre of her desk.
"I'll get 'em." Frank got up and wandered over to pick up the paper for his partner.

>"Ta." Rachel grunted, slapping the papers back onto the pile where they belonged, just to blow them and several others off again with another sneeze twice as strong as the first.
"Shit. Any cases?" Rachel threw Frank a glare that told him to sit down at his desk when he turned to go and pick the papers up again.

>Frank sat down and watched Rachel pick the paper up, then pull her sick body up with the aid of the desk. "What're you lookin' at Holloway? Well? Any cases or not?" Rachel snapped in a hoarse whisper.
"Nope." Frank replied and went back to his work.

>"ACHOO!!! SHIT!!!!" Rachel bellowed through a whisper as half of the pile flew onto the floor.
"Stuff them. I'm going down to see Helen." Rachel snarled, pulling herself up with the help of her desk again and hobbling out of the door leaving Frank wondering what he'd do if a case did arise.

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"Guys, I've got a case for you. Rachel, I don't think it's wise for you to be at work." Helen tried to persuade her best friend to go home.

>"Bollix. I'm fine."
Helen sighed. She would never persuade the stubborn Detective to do anything she wanted her to. "Rach, I think you should, mate, you look sick as a dog!" Frank added.

>"Shut up Francis. I'm old enough to look after myself." Rachel snapped grabbing the car keys out of her top drawer.
Rachel stood up too fast. She stood for a second or two, but her blue eyes rolled

back and whatever was holding her up let her drop. She fell to the floor like a limp doll and hit with a hollow thud. She lay sprawled out, car keys still in her hand, on the blue commercial carpet, as pale as a sheet. "Frank, call an ambulance!" Helen was beside Rachel in a millisecond, trying to wake her up, but to no avail.

>Frank hurriedly gave the ambulance crew the details, and went to see if he could help. "Is she breathing?" Frank asked quickly.
"Yeah, just, and her pulse is fast and weak. Oh god Rach, you should've stayed at home." Helen hugged Rachel's limp body, cradling her on her knee like a sleeping child.

>"Should I go get Jeff?" Frank didn't know what to do.
"Yeah, tell him to get his butt in here quick-smart." Helen muttered, trying to wake Rachel up.

>Frank hooned out of the door at full speed to get the Chief Inspector, and yelled at Tayler to get the ambulance crew up there when they arrived. He popped his head into Jeff's office, ignoring the glare he received for not knocking first. "Sir, Helen wants you, Rachel's passed out." Frank was going pale too.
The Chief Inspector sprung from his cushy leather chair and ran into the Ds's office to find Sergeant Blakemore still trying to wake Rachel.

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The ambulance crew burst through the door a few minutes later, pushing Frank out of the way. Sweat was beading on her forehead, and her breathing was laboured. She was still out cold, showing no signs of waking up. The ambulance crew quickly put an oxygen mask on her, and stabilised her before putting her on a stretcher. The two paramedics carried her out into the corridor and down the stairs, a small procession following them. "Any of you want to go with her?" One of them asked quickly, his brow furrowed.

>"Yeah, I'll go." Frank quickly volunteered, and followed the paramedics out to the waiting rescue helicopter.
The pair of paramedics loaded Rachel in, and helped Frank in. The door slammed shut, and the helicopter lifted off, leaving Helen, Jeff, and the rest of the station staring after it. It had all happened too fast for comprehension... their Rachel Goldstein, often nicknamed "iron woman" because of her strength, was *very* sick.

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Frank twiddled his thumbs, but got sick of it. He tried to read a magazine, but gave up halfway through a story about Prince Harry's "hard" life - he went to the most expensive school in the world, he was rich, he had a doting father, he had his own house, and his own car. How tragic, poor kid. Frank talked to an old guy next to him, but then the guy left to see his wife in intensive care. He tried to chat up a nurse, but was ignored. He tried to count the dots in the ceiling tiles but lost his place at 207. He tried to solve an unsolved case, but he'd forgotten the details. It was a relief when a doctor finally came up to him. "Detective Holloway? I'm Doctor Andrew Maxwell. I understand you came in with Detective Rachel Goldstein?" The young, handsome doctor seemed nice enough.

>"Yeah. Is she gonna be okay?" Frank was really worried.
"Yes, we think so. She's got the flu quite badly, but since she's young and strong we're pretty sure she'll make a full recovery. How long has she been sick for, do you know?" Doctor Maxwell asked cautiously.

>"Nah, sorry. She didn't seem sick yesterday, but she's a very stubborn, independent person, so even if she was she wouldn't let on." Frank replied.
"I see." The doctor shot Frank an understanding grin.

>"Can I see her now?" Frank asked, desperately wanting to see that his partner and best mate was okay.
"Yeah, sure. Come on through.

Now, she's very sick, and she's on a ventilator because of her asthma and the flu combined, and she's very weak. She's unconscious, but she may be able to hear you." Doctor Maxwell told Frank leading the way into a large white room.

>Frank had to put on a facemask before entering to protect both himself and Rachel from any bugs. As he walked in he stopped dead. Frank hardly recognised Rachel. She looked so tiny and frail underneath the white hospital sheet. She had tubes everywhere, and the ventilator steadily pumped air into her lungs. Her dark brown hair spilled onto the white pillow, and she looked paler than the whiter-than-white walls. For the first time Frank saw her vulnerable. She looked like a porcelain doll, like she would shatter with one touch. Frank's feelings for her were very clear to him. He loved Rachel more than anyone he'd loved before. And he might lose her...
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>Frank had fallen asleep after a few hours of willing Rachel to wake up, and talking to her quietly. She'd come off the ventilator, but was still in bad shape. Nurses came in and out, smiling sad smiles when they saw Frank and Rachel both looking so innocent, Frank gripping Rachel's hand as if to make sure she wouldn't drift away from him. Frank finally woke up at about 3pm to find Helen standing at the doorway watching them, a bunch of flowers in her arms. "How is she?" Helen asked, stepping into the room and noting all of the equipment surrounding the hospital bed.
"Not so good." Frank grimaced as he looked into Rachel's face to see the same ghostly creature that was his partner.

>Helen filled up a bedside jug with water from the basin next to the door, and placed the flowers in it. She quietly put them on a bedside set of drawers, pulled up a chair and sat on the opposite side of the bed from Frank. "I've never seen her like this before." Frank muttered into his clasped hands, looking ten years older than usual, dark circles making his eyes appear sunken.
Helen grinned sadly and placed her hand on top of Frank and Rachel's. The pair sat in silence watching Rachel for a few minutes, willing her to wake up. "Kiss her." Helen said suddenly.

>"What?" Frank asked, astonishment written in bold letters across his entire face.
"Kiss her!" Helen repeated.

>"Wh... why?" Frank stuttered, wondering which drugs Helen was on.
"Like on Snow White!" Helen chuckled.

>"Okay, who are you and where did you put Sergeant Helen Blakemore?" Frank asked, bewildered.
"I'm kidding. Lighten up mate, you're no use to her in your condition." Helen said wisely.

>"Fine, I'll lighten up then!" Frank bent down, lips puckered underneath the facemask, and was about one centimetre away from Rachel's lips when...
"Do and die Holloway." Rachel's dazzling blue eyes flew open, a familiar glare burning in them.

>"Told you it would work!" Helen cracked up laughing.
Frank just looked shocked. Rachel continued glaring at him, looking as sick as she felt. "What the hell happened?" Rachel whispered hoarsely.

>"You collapsed and wouldn't wake up. Had to call the ambos!" Frank explained, his eyes sparkling with mischief.
"How long was I out?" Rachel whispered again.

>"Nearly five hours. You gave us a huge scare, Rachel." Helen's relief was evident.
"I feel like crap." Rachel admitted slowly and quietly before her eyes slowly became too heavy for her to hold up.

>"Night Rach." Frank grinned, knowing she'd be okay.
"Yeah, sweet dreams Rachel." Helen brushed a piece of hair off her white cheek

gently.

>"Guess we should leave her in peace, eh?" Frank whispered to Helen.
"Yeah, guess so. You heading home? Jeff's given us both the rest of the day off." Helen whispered back.

>"Home? Nah... Say, where're you off to?" Frank asked Helen, a brilliant idea popping into his mind.
"Home probably." Helen grimaced at the boring sound of it.

>"Nah, you're not. You're coming to have a celebratory drink with me at Cutters. To drink to a full recovery by the best Detective in the whole of Sydney, female one that is." Frank grinned cheekily.
"Good idea. Say, Frank, who's the best male Detective in the whole of Sydney?" Helen asked curiously.

>Frank just grinned and indicated his lips were zipped.

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>"FRANK!!!" Rachel bellowed from the D's office when she got back to work a week later.
Frank grinned at Helen and ran upstairs to see what he'd done now. "Wow, everything's back to normal at last." Helen told Tayler who nodded her head wholeheartedly.

>Frank cautiously entered the room on his toes and ready to run in case a hard object came flying at him. It wouldn't be the first time. Rachel was fuming at her desk, staring at a massive pile of paper on her desk with a look that could have made the stack spontaneously combust. "What the HELL is all of this?" Rachel asked through gritted teeth, trying not to let herself strangle Frank who was taking shelter behind his desk.
"Uh, paperwork?" Frank offered, ducking as a dictionary went whistling past his head and slamming into the wall behind him.

>"WHOSE paperwork?" Rachel looked like her head was going to explode.
"Yours since you weren't here to help me out..." Frank ducked as a Yearbook sailed past, also slamming into the wall to add another large dent to the collection.

>"I WAS IN HOSPITAL YOU BASTARD!!!!" Rachel yelled at the top of her lungs.
"HEY!!!!" Jeff stuck his head in, "Quiet down in here, we can hear you down on the jetty Rachel!"

>"Sorry sir." Rachel muttered, throwing a killer glare at Frank who was grinning innocently at a blank piece of paper, trying to look busy.
"That's better. Nice to see you back, Rachel." Jeff said with an acknowledging glance.

>"Thank you." Rachel said, grinning sweetly at Jeff as he shut the door again.
"You're gonna pay for this Francis Holloway." Rachel said coldly, tackling the first sheet of paperwork.

>The pair worked in a tense silence for about ten minutes until Frank couldn't wait to ask Rachel a question any longer. "Rach, how did you know I was going to kiss you?" Frank asked curiously.
"Easy. I could hear you and Helen talking, and when I felt you're warmth, I woke up in a nick of time and told you off." Rachel said smugly, laying aside the first sheet of completed paperwork.

>"Oh." Frank went back to work.
"Frank?" Rachel looked at Frank's grin and wanted to know what he was grinning about.

>"What?"
"Why are you grinning?"

>"No reason."
"You sure?"

>"Yeah."
"Yeah?"

>"Yeah."
"Absolutely positively?"

>"I was just remembering the look on your face when you woke up."
"You should've seen yours mate." Rachel snickered, remembering the shocked expression Frank wore when she spoke.

>"Yeah?"
"Yeah."

>"Yeah?"
"Yeah."

>"Did you know you're annoying?"
"Yeah."
>"I've got a sore throat." Frank remarked, pulling a packet of throat lollies out of his drawer.
"I'm outa here."
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The End!!!
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What a "piece of fluff"! Well, it's 9.35pm and I've been writing this for ages, and I haven't got up since I started, so I'm outa here. What the heck happened to my "no romance" policy? Must have gone out the window. Must be PMS. Hope you enjoyed it as much as I enjoyed writing it!
> <p><p>

End
file.